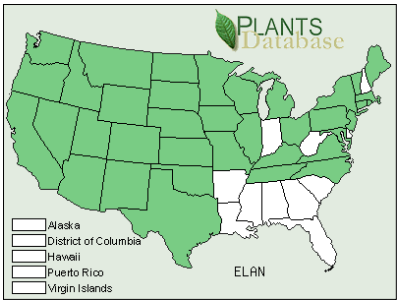
Russian Olive *Elaeagnus angustifolia* L.

Common Names:
Russian-olive, oleaster

Native Origin:
Southern Europe and western Asia; planted in landscapes, along roadsides because of salt tolerance, for windbreaks, wildlife habitat, and surface mine reclamation

Description: Russian-olive is a small deciduous tree or large thorny shrub in the oleaster family (*Elaeagnaceae*) that can grow 15 to 30 feet in height. It is generally rounded in shape with loose arrangement of branches. Its stems, buds, and leaves have a dense covering of silvery to rusty scales. Twigs have silvery scales and thorns on the ends. Leaves are simple, alternate, 1-3 inches long, lance-shaped and silvery on both sides. Flowers appear in June and July. They are bell-shaped, single or clustered in the leaf axils, fragrant, yellowish on the inside and silver outside. Olive like fruits are dupe-like, .5 inches long, light green to yellow with silvery scales, hard and fleshy. Plants begin to flower and fruit at three years of age. Reproduction is by seed, sprouting from buds on the root crown and suckering.



Habitat: It is found along fields, open areas, grasslands, stream banks, lakeshores, roadsides, and urban areas, sandy and bare mineral soils. Seedlings are tolerant of shade and it thrives in a variety of soil and moisture conditions, including bare mineral substrates.

Distribution: This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is reported invasive in AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, MD, MI, MN, MT, NC, NE, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OK, OR, PA, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WA, and WI .

Ecological Impacts: This invasive plant can interfere with natural plant succession, nutrient cycling, and tax water reserves. Because Russian-olive is capable of fixing nitrogen in its roots, it can grow on bare, mineral substrates and dominate riparian vegetation where over-story cottonwoods have died. Although Russian-olive provides a plentiful source of edible fruits for birds, ecologists have found that bird species richness is actually higher in riparian areas dominated by native vegetation.

Control and Management:

- **Manual**- Mowing hedges with a brush type mower, followed by removal of cut material are an effective method for eradication.
- **Chemical**- It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as triclopyr or imazapyr. Metasulfuron-methyl with a surfactant is also reported to be highly effective in controlling this plant. Follow label and state requirements.

References: www.forestimages.org, http://plants.usda.gov, www.nps.gov/plants/alien, Czarapata, Elizabeth J. Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest, An Illustrated Guide to their Identification and Control, 2005 p. 90, Miller, James H. Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests, A Field Guide for Identification and Control, USDA FS SRS-62, p. 13, 72-73